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City Civil Defense Charter Amendment

City Club of Portland (Portland, Or.)

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Report on CITY CIVIL DEFENSE CHARTER AMENDMENT

PURPOSE: An Act to amend the city charter to provide for a special property tax levy for civil defense purposes of one mill on each one dollar of assessed valuation for the fiscal year 1951-1952, in addition to and outside the tax limitation contained in the state Constitution, to provide funds for civil defense purposes, to allow use of said funds wholly or in part for matching federal or state funds for civil defense use for the City of Portland, and to authorize acceptance of state and federal grants.

SHALL THE CHARTER BE SO AMENDED?

500 YES, I VOTE FOR THE AMENDMENT

501 NO, I VOTE AGAINST THE AMENDMENT

CITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION NO. 24989: An amendment to the City Charter to be voted upon by the people in a special election to be held June 19th, the amendment being Section 7-117, which section shall read as follows:

Section 7-117. SPECIAL TAX LEVY FOR CIVIL DEFENSE. The Council hereby is authorized and directed to levy for the fiscal year 1951-1952 at the time taxes are levied for the payment of expenses for the City a special tax of one (1) mill on each dollar of assessed valuation on all property in the City of Portland not exempt from taxation. The proceeds from said levy shall be placed in a special fund to be designated the Civil Defense Fund. The money in said fund shall be expended for the purpose of matching any other funds from the federal or state governments or both, which may be made available for the purchase of organizational equipment and supplies to be available for civil defense, including but not limited to communications equipment, warning devices, field equipment, medical first-aid equipment, fire equipment and rescue and warden equipment, for the construction of communications centers or other facilities for civil defense purposes, for preservation of essential city records, for installation and maintenance of equipment and for other preparation for possible civil defense needs, or for purchase, installation, construction or other expenditure for such purposes and preparation at the sole expense of the City, all such expenditures to be made as in the judgment of the City Council shall best meet the needs and requirements of the people.

Such special tax hereby is specifically authorized and it shall not be counted as within the limitation provided by Section 11 of Article XI of the Constitution of the State of Oregon, or any other law, and said special tax hereby specifically authorized shall be in addition to all other taxes which may be levied according to law.

The Council hereby is authorized to accept from the United States Government, any federal agency and the State of Oregon, any grant or grants of funds which may be used to pay for or apply upon the cost of any or all of the purposes mentioned herein or any part thereof or other civil defense purpose.

To the Board of Governors, The City Club of Portland:

Your committee assigned to study the above proposed City Charter Amendment, which will be submitted to the people in a special election on June 19th (concurrently with the school bond election) reports as follows:

The proposed one-mill property tax is outside the statutory six percent tax limitation and will yield an estimated \$600,000 (a figure to be corrected when actual assessed valuation has been determined).

The purposes for which the proposed levy may be spent are stated in Section 7-117 above. In brief there are two principal purposes: first, to provide what may be described as "minimum" defense equipment and facilities designed to protect life and property in the event of any enemy bomb attack; second, to provide funds to be used as matching funds from federal or state governments, or both, for additional equipment and facilities for defense purposes, when and if such funds become available.

In other words, if neither federal nor state matching funds are available, the levy

will enable Portland to provide a minimum defense organization at a cost of between \$500,000 and \$600,000, including, and with particular emphasis upon, an underground communications center at an estimated cost of \$360,000.

It is not contemplated that any of these funds (from levy or matching funds) will be used for the construction of air-raid shelters or other pre-attack facilities except the alerting system designed to warn people and alert the various disaster units. The basic theory of the civil defense organization is to safeguard life and property after the attack has occurred, since, according to our military authorities, a maximum of twenty minutes and a minimum of six minutes' warning can be expected in the event of a surprise enemy attack.

The estimated items comprising the "minimum" defense organization to be created from the proceeds of the special levy follow:

TABULATION I

STRUCTURES	COST
1 Underground Communications Control Center	\$300,000.00
(East Side-Mt. Tabor) 70' x 113'	
Equipment for above	59,950.00
1 Steel Auxiliary Control Center	16,000.00
(West Side) 20' x 80'	
Equipment for above	33,925.00
Radio Equipment Maintenance	12,150.00
Preservation of Permanent Records	21,051.00
Civil Defense Headquarters	3,125.50
Monitoring Instruments	
GENERAL USE	
Handi-Talkies	7,125.00
Police Precincts — Equipment	2,400.00
Fire Fighters' Equipment	31,901.50
Medical Dept. — Equipment and Supplies	31,640.40
Headquarters — Equipment	3,372.00
Arm Bands and Supplies	5,500.00
Public Works — Radio Equipment	900.00
Signs and Identification Cards	6,572.00
Training Manuals	4,970.00

\$540,582.40

If maximum federal matching funds (\$800,000) and state (\$200,000) become available, the total available for the defense organization will be \$1,600,000, so that an additional \$1,000,000 over the proceeds of the special levy will be available to purchase as much as possible of the additional facilities listed below:

TABULATION II

150 Additional Warning Devices @ \$200.00	\$ 30,000.00
30 Self-Contained Fire Fighting Units @ \$2,000.00	600,000.00
60 First Aid Units @ \$3,000.00	180,000.00
40 Units Medical Supplies and Equipment @ \$21,125.00	845,000.00
80 2-Way Radio Sets @ \$215.00	17,200.00
85 Detection Instruments @ \$175.00	14,875.00
26 Monitoring Team Supplies and Equipment @ \$26.00	1,560.00
10 Special Rescue Equipment @ \$20,000.00	200,000.00

\$1,888,635.00

TOTAL \$2,429,217.40

It is appropriate to present a brief analysis of the status quo in civil defense both as it relates to the present city budget and the probable availability of federal and state matching funds for civil defense purposes.

(1) For almost a year past, the City of Portland has been building up a civil defense organization through the use of existing departmental personnel and facilities, in conjunction with volunteer civilian organizations and cooperating county agencies and organizations. No city funds have been available for this purpose except the "loaning" of personnel. The general budget of the city for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1951, includes provision for personnel assigned from the Police Department and Fire Department to civil defense, plus provision for some incidental expenses such as stationery and

postage, but does not include any substantial provision for the acquisition of equipment deemed necessary for civil defense purposes.

(2) The Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950 contemplates, but makes no appropriations for, contributions to states on the basis of programs or projects approved by the administrator. One appropriation measure has been enacted and others are pending in Congress. (Note: The Portland civil defense organization follows the recommended federal pattern, and the proposed charter amendment is so worded that the funds produced by the levy may be used to match federal appropriations for approved items, or may be used to enable the city to proceed in advance of or without regard to Congressional appropriations.)

(3) The 1951 Oregon Legislature has appropriated \$268,400 for the purpose of matching federal grants-in-aid for the acquisition of organizational equipment for any city designated by the Federal Civil Defense Administration as a critical target city. Portland is so designated. Upon the optimistic assumption that Portland would receive \$200,000 of state funds, and that the proposed levy would produce \$600,000, and that federal matching funds of \$800,000 would be available, the total made available by the proposed levy for defense purposes would be \$1,600,000.

(4) To provide all the facilities and equipment recommended by state and federal civil defense administrators, and deemed necessary by Mayor Dorothy McCulloch Lee and her advisers, would require a total of \$2,430,000 (Tabulations I and II). It is expected that matching federal funds will be available for these purposes but appropriation bills are still in committee in Congress.

Before proceeding to the arguments for and against the proposed Charter Amendment it should be noted that the very nature of the purposes for which the proposed levy will be used precludes the presentation of factual data upon which the usual "pro" and "con" debate is predicated. The answer to one basic question seems to establish the premise upon which the vote for or against the proposed levy will be determined. The question is: "Is Portland actually in danger of enemy bomb (and probably atomic bomb) attack?"

If the answer is yes, it would seem that ordinary discretion would make civil defense preparations of some sort imperative.

If the answer is no, it is then equally self-evident that public funds — city, state, and federal — should be devoted to more immediate and pressing governmental purposes. The special levy is justifiable only as insurance against a supposed hazard. Is the premium justified by the risk?

Thus your committee finds itself in the unique position of being able to present factual data and expert opinion only on one side of a presumably debateable question. Since the answer to the basic question above is the governing factor, and the answer can be derived only from expert (military) opinion with which the individual voter may or may not agree, your Committee has been unable to discover any appreciable opposition from any source. Tax analysts interviewed by your Committee stated that they would not oppose the levy on any of the usual grounds (governmental economy, anti-inflation, oppressive property tax burden, etc.), but would be governed entirely by their decision as to the public safety factors inherent in the basic question.

ARGUMENTS FOR THE CHARTER AMENDMENT

(1) Our top military authorities, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have informed Mayor Lee that

- (a) There is grave danger, during the next two or three years of our rearmament program, that the Soviet war leaders will order a mass bombing attack, probably with atom bombs, upon prime industrial targets of the United States for the purpose of destroying or seriously crippling our war potential;
- (b) Our military intelligence reports Soviet air power quantitatively, to be far superior to our own, and that such a sudden mass attack could not fail to achieve at least a part of the enemy objective;
- (c) Military intelligence reports Soviet bombers ready, manned and equipped for such attack at any moment the Kremlin so decides, and
- (d) Portland is not only classed as a prime target but is also one of the three prime U. S. targets (Portland, Seattle and San Francisco) within range of a round-trip attack from Soviet bases.

(2) The proposed tax levy therefore represents a form of minimum insurance designed to reduce the loss of lives and property following an atomic attack. If the attack comes, it will not await the action of Congress in providing matching funds. The purpose of the levy is to provide a minimum defense organization regardless of Congressional appropriation, and to increase that organization if and when matching funds are available. From the insurance angle, the cost to Portland citizens will be slightly more than one dollar per capita.

(3) In the event there is no atomic attack, the largest single item in the "minimum" civil defense requirements (\$360,000.00 for a communications control center) will not be a total loss. On the contrary, the City's Department of Public Safety points out that the proposed control center would have an essential peace-time use during the next 25 years, and would in fact permit the immediate construction of a central control which must be provided later in any event. For fire and police control purposes such a plant would be in use 24 hours a day the year around regardless of enemy attack.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT

(1) The principal argument against the levy is based upon the key question: Is there actual danger of atomic attack? This is a question which the individual voter must decide for himself in the light of top military opinion and the information on the international situation available to him through press reports of current events.

(2) One critical viewpoint is that our present national Administration, with at least the acquiescence of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has on several occasions used an imminent "critical" international situation as a convenient means of forcing Congressional approval of administration-sponsored appropriations. This argument, again, reflects the doubts inherent in the basic question.

(3) Other critical approaches to the basic question are: (a) that it is the duty of the Federal Government, not that of the local governmental unit, to provide for the common defense; (b) that no provision has been made in the present civil defense blueprint against the destruction of Portland's vulnerable water supply; (c) that the proposed program as a whole is vague and indefinite.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of your Committee relate largely to the basic question: "Is Portland actually in danger of enemy bomb (and probably atomic bomb) attack?"

Your Committee concludes this question falls within the area of international political and military affairs, and that it is the part of ordinary prudence to give weight to the opinion of our highest military authorities in this field. The imminence of such attack lies in the field of pure speculation, but even the remote danger of a catastrophe of such magnitude requires at least a minimum of advance preparation to safeguard life and property.

Your Committee concludes further that present action making funds available for the purposes specified in this measure is imperative. Action must be taken at this time to the end that funds may be realized from taxes for the fiscal year beginning July 1. If this levy fails, minimum defense requirements must be postponed for another year, a year believed to be most critical.

Your Committee recommends, therefore, that the City Club go on record as approving the proposed Charter Amendment, and that the vote be 500 X Yes, I Vote for the Amendment.

Respectfully submitted,

THOMAS L. GATCH

C. E. ZOLLINGER

ROBERT ORMOND CASE, *Chairman*

Approved June 5, 1951, for submission to the Board of Governors by Orlando Davidson, *Section Chairman, Public Safety*. Received by the Board of Governors June 7, 1951, and ordered printed and submitted to the membership for discussion and action.